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arglebargle!

monday, december 17, 2007

Some Classic Christmas

I've collected so many images the past few years that I guess a post of pix from Xmases past was inevitable. A prime opportunity to start things off with a shot of the always-lovely Miss Bettie Page being positively fetching in festive spirits... (and why not?)

After the end of World War II, Christmas boomed in America and took on heretofore unseen Macy-Parade-Balloon proportions. Decorations themselves became a whole different animal as we reached the middle point of the last century. All new highs in cheerful-insanity and engineering-excess were an integral to the holiday experience...at least the commercial part.

about me

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previous posts

the new adventures of huckleberry finn-intro(full ...
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Bits o' Weirdness #1
Battle of the Brothers!

Take this giant fiberglass Santa outside a department store for example... much more detailed and classically surreal than the big inflatable he'd be today.

ahh... and those department store window displays. Not a damn cell phone in sight...

2009 is Bustin' Loose All Over!
R. I. P. Bettie Page
Black & White in COLOR #5 : The CREATURE!

archives

April 2006
May 2006
June 2006
July 2006
August 2006
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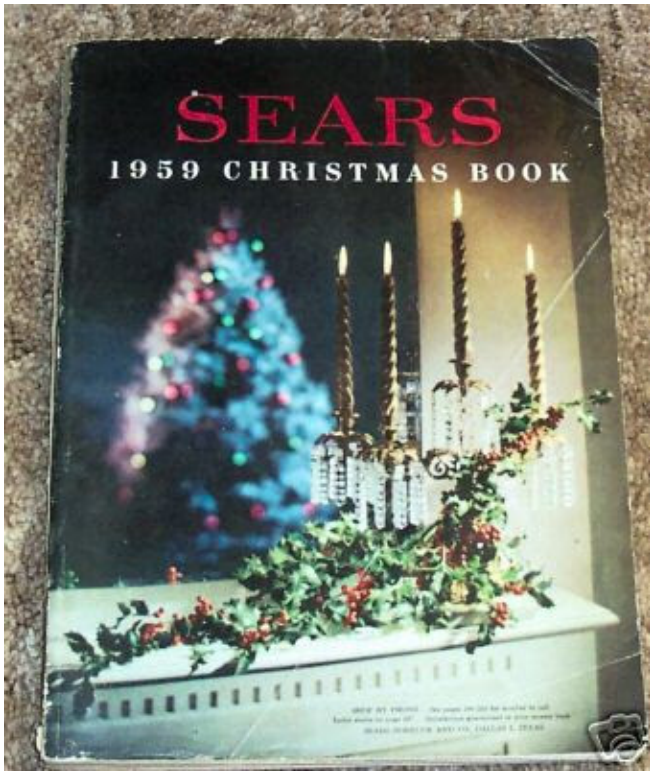
I Power Blogger

We always went to my Grandmothers in Florida for Christmas, and almost every small town along the way had their own set of main street trappings. I remember this style in particular.

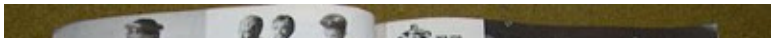
Ad-men reached new heights in abstracting the holiday in the 1940s & 50s... sometimes it was even hard to tell if Santa himself was truly being good or bad. (Wotta *Shill*, btw.)

Here's a room with an offbeat tree display from 1955 (I know that smell).



And there was no Amazon or Wallmart... in the 1960s WE had the *Sears Wish Book*!
(It usually came in the mail around Halloween.)

Where you could order anything you could think of practically!



...The toy sections seemed endless... (and what a great spread this is!)

Yeah... Like I *Wish* I still had that Bugs Bunny.

And pages and pages of Christmas decor...

Sears, Pennys and all the Catalog stores sold more than a couple of different types of Mangers and accessories...

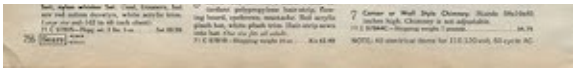
Recreate Nativity scene with this 12-pc. Figure Set
$24.99
Ornament Chest organizes, helps prevent damage
18-inch diameter Circle of Plenty Wreath features apples, berries, numerous snow-topped pine cones
$68.99

And all the cheesy crap that I love so much now...

Sears Santa Suits can help you become a most jolly fellow at Christmastime
Our best Santa Suit is made of shape-retaining, quilted nylon tricot
$39.99
Lighted Fireplace with extending chimney
$69.99
Enchanting Magic Glow Village
$60.00
13-piece set of Miniature Figures at winter play
$3.99
Santa's Workshop
$4.99
Our lowest price this season for any corduroy Santa Suit
$29.99
Cordana® Suit with (polypropylene beard)
$19.99

Love the cardboard fireplaces. (Kids in apartments need a Santa snorkel too!)

Don't Miss This
Only $2.99 for a 35-inch tall red and white Hearth
Resembles the cozy look of burning logs
Santa dress-up Suit for children sizes 3 to 5
Merry Christmas
Santa Suits . . each with whiskers, hat, belt and boot tops for lovable pretenders
Red Fireplaces give the realistic appearance of burning logs with flickering flames



Say "Season's Greetings" to your guests
Set out a warm welcome for your friends with a decorative door panel and accessories
Choose from 3 brightly colored Christmas scenes, many bright and cheery decorations

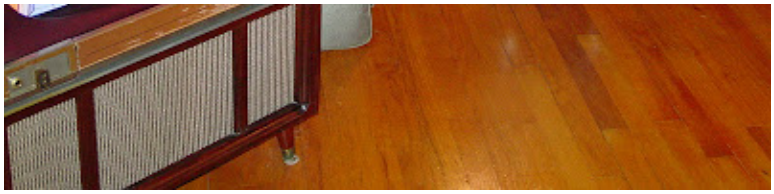
The door coverings were hot at the end of the '60s. Ehh... not so much now.

Where's all this big-plastic illuminated stuff now? Antique stores? Flea Markets?

There's a couple of these plastic Santas around town that I've noticed... and they're TALL --around 5 feet!

Well, keeping the spirit alive here's our very own front door from last Christmas 2006. (The illuminated Reindeer we bought at sears in 1993 -- the last year they sold them... The "Noel pole" I bought at Zayre in 1974 --for 3.99).

And here's the view down our walkway to the front door.



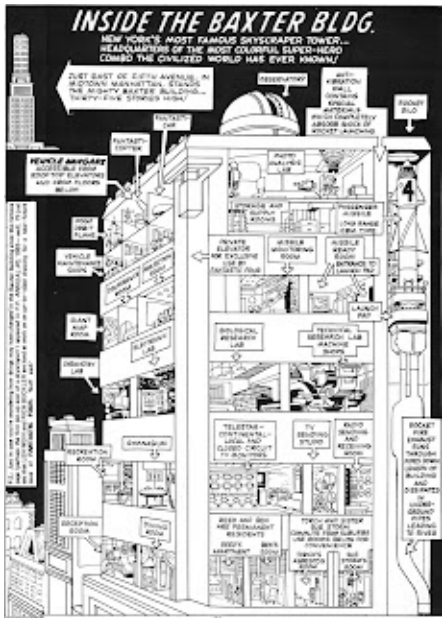
And last, when I went inside I snapped this picture of our own set -- and I didn't fake this, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* was actually on Cartoon Network at the time.
HAPPY HOLIDAYS FOLKS!
Best wishes to all Arglebargle readers! Stay tuned --much more ahead in 2008!

Labels: 1950s, 1960s, Bettie Page, Classic Christmas, Decorations, Sears, Wish Book

posted by c. martin croker at 6:40 pm | 13 comments

saturday, december 08, 2007

Inside the Baxter Building



Behold -- The world-famous Baxter Building!

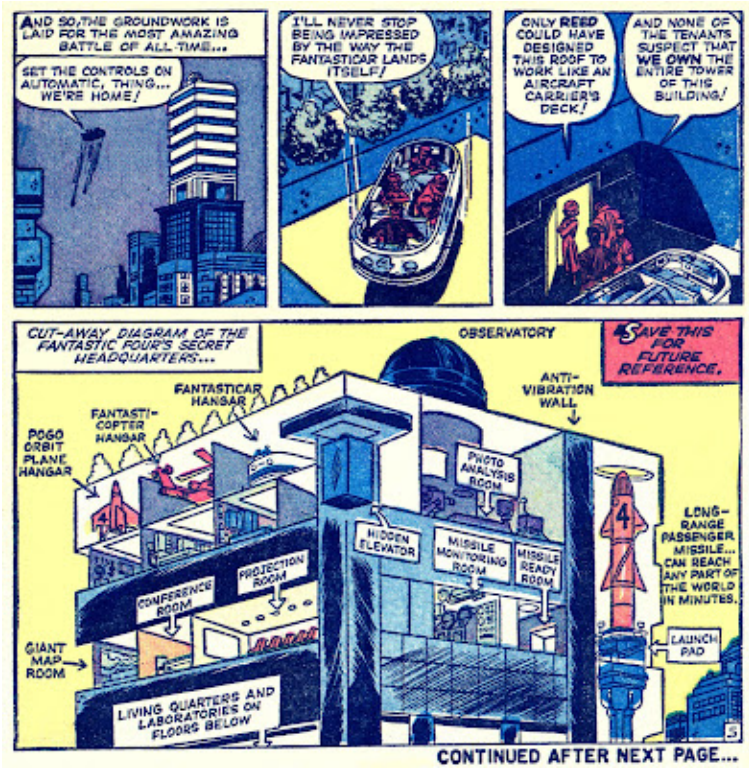
One of the great things about the Fantastic Four comics was all the super-nutty Kirby gizmos and gadgets.
Crazy stuff --like James Bond gear on steroids *and* acid!
And talk about high maintenance... the team needed enough space for a Fantasti-car, a Pogo Plane, a Fantasti-Copter, a Private Passenger ICBM, an Observatory, an entrance to the negative zone, a computer room, a chemical lab, a photo analysis lab, a projection room, a gymnasium, trophy room and living quarters (just to name a few). Naturally, a Super-team with **this** much baggage needed an exceptional uh... *"secret"* base of operations. Where better, than the middle of Manhattan Island in NYC? (...yeah --good luck with that telescope, Stretcho.) Specifically floors 30 through 35 on the top of the Baxter Building.
Within the confines of these 5 floors lay a virtual crime-fightin' and weird experimentin' complex the likes of which the world had never seen before! So large in scope, that it prompted several celebrated cutaway views of of the Building's insides --presumably to help the reader figure out exactly where all the action was taking place.
I'd thought about doing a post like this last summer... but when I picked up issue #1 of Marvel's new ***Mythos Fantastic Four*** book last week and saw that the title artist Paolo Rivera had just done an updated cutaway, I knew the time was right.

So, here --for the first time I'm aware of-- are ALL

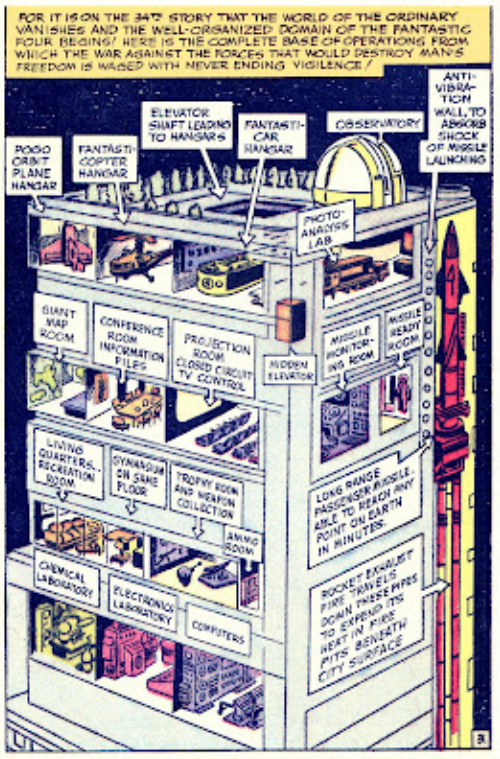
cutaways of the Baxter building to date!

...featuring insane amounts of Photoshop restoration on the old versions by yours truly so they can be blown up big and still look great. All cleaned up from my own issues of the original books they appeared in, with the original (minus the yellowing) color schemes. Enjoy!

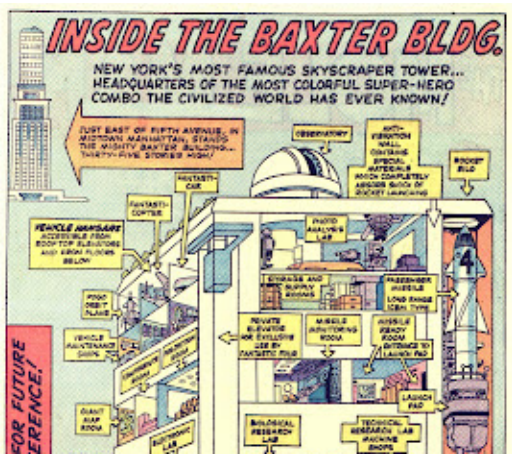
While the F.F. had already defeated the Mole Man and the Skrulls,
it wasn't until issue #3 that we got to see some Fantasti-car (known these days more commonly as the Flyin' Bathtub) and found out the secrets of the "Fantastic Four's Skyscraper Hide-Out!" This was the first time the Baxter Building and it's contents --at least the top two floors of it were diagrammed.

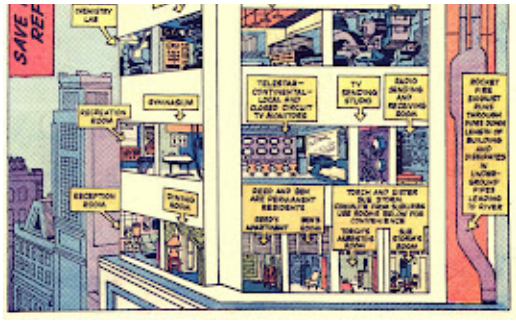

AND SO, THE GROUNDWORK IS LAID FOR THE MOST AMAZING BATTLE OF ALL TIME...
SET THE CONTROLS ON AUTOMATIC, THING... WE'RE HOME!
I'LL NEVER STOP BEING IMPRESSED BY THE WAY THE FANTASTICAR LANDS ITSELF!
ONLY REED COULD HAVE DESIGNED THIS ROOF TO WORK LIKE AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER'S DECK!
AND NONE OF THE TENANTS SUSPECT THAT WE OWN THE ENTIRE TOWER OF THIS BUILDING!
CUT-AWAY DIAGRAM OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S SECRET HEADQUARTERS...
SAVE THIS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.
OBSERVATORY
ANTI-VIBRATION WALL
FANTASTICAR HANGAR
FANTASTI-COPTER HANGAR
POGO ORBIT PLANE HANGAR
PHOTO ANALYSIS ROOM
HIDDEN ELEVATOR
MISSILE MONITORING ROOM
MISSILE READY ROOM
PROJECTION ROOM
CONFERENCE ROOM
GIANT MAP ROOM
LIVING QUARTERS AND LABORATORIES ON FLOORS BELOW
LONG-RANGE PASSENGER MISSILE... CAN REACH ANY PART OF THE WORLD IN MINUTES.
LAUNCH PAD
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

It wasn't long though--just three issues in fact-- before Jack was at it again. From issue #6, here's a slightly more complete look at the top **5** floors of "the world's greatest office building".

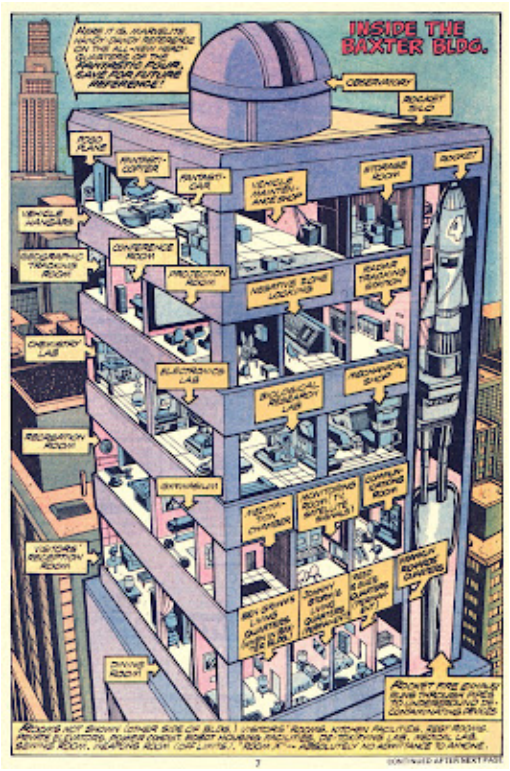

FOR IT IS ON THE 34TH STORY THAT THE WORLD OF THE ORDINARY VANISHES AND THE WELL-ORGANIZED DOMAIN OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR BEGINS! HERE IS THE COMPLETE BASE OF OPERATIONS FROM WHICH THE WAR AGAINST THE FORCES THAT WOULD DESTROY MAN'S FREEDOM IS WAGED WITH NEVER ENDING VIGILENCE!
ANTI-VIBRATION WALL, TO ABSORB SHOCK OF MISSILE LAUNCHING
OBSERVATORY
ELEVATOR SHAFT LEADING TO HANGARS
FANTASTI-CAR HANGAR
FANTASTI-COPTER HANGAR
POGO ORBIT PLANE HANGAR
PHOTO-ANALYSIS LAB
GIANT MAP ROOM
CONFERENCE ROOM INFORMATION FILES
PROJECTION ROOM CLOSED CIRCUIT TV CONTROL
HIDDEN ELEVATOR
MISSILE MONITORING ROOM
MISSILE READY ROOM
LIVING QUARTERS-RECREATION ROOM
GYMNASIUM ON SAME FLOOR
TROPHY ROOM AND WEAPON COLLECTION
AMMO ROOM
CHEMICAL LABORATORY
ELECTRONICS LABORATORY
COMPUTERS
LONG RANGE PASSENGER MISSILE ABLE TO REACH ANY POINT ON EARTH IN MINUTES.
ROCKET EXHAUST FIRE TRAVELS DOWN THESE PIPES TO EXPEND ITS HEAT IN FIRE PITS BENEATH CITY SURFACE

Here's Jack's third and final take (to my knowledge) on the FF's HQ innards...
As it originally appeared in Fantastic Four Annual #3 (this version was also printed in Black and White in the back inside cover of the 1975 over-sized Fantastic Four Treasury. I ran it too, back up a the top... And though on that printing there's a blurb with an allusion made to the then-current book's team of Len Wein and Rich Buckler doing an updated cutaway ***soon***, I don't recall them actually getting around to it.


INSIDE THE BAXTER BLDG.
NEW YORK'S MOST FAMOUS SKYSCRAPER TOWER... HEADQUARTERS OF THE MOST COLORFUL SUPER-HERO COMBO THE CIVILIZED WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN!
JUST EAST OF FIFTH AVENUE, IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN, STANDS THE MIGHTY BAXTER BUILDING... THIRTY-FIVE STORIES HIGH!
OBSERVATORY
ANTI-VIBRATION WALL...
ROCKET BLD.
FANTASTI-CAR
FANTASTI-COPTER
VEHICLE HANGARS
PHOTO ANALYSIS LAB
PASSENGER MISSILE
LONG RANGE (ICBM) TYPE
POGO ORBIT PLANE
PRIVATE ELEVATOR FOR EXCLUSIVE USE BY FANTASTIC FOUR
MISSILE MONITORING ROOM
MISSILE READY ROOM
LAUNCH PAD
BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH LAB
TECHNICAL RESEARCH LAB
FOR FUTURE REFERENCE!

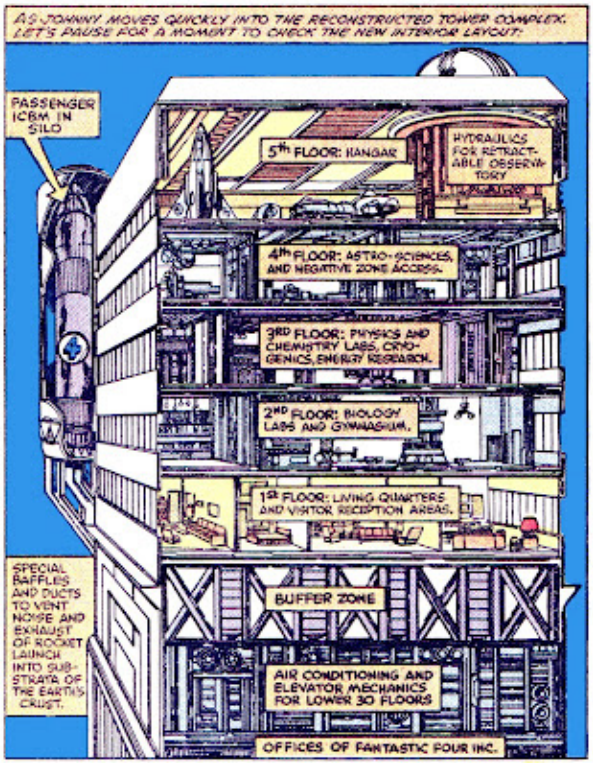


A decade and over a hundred issues passed before anyone would attempt a new Baxter bldg pin-up, but after the big Gonzo blowout with Dr. Doom in issue #200, Keith Pollard and Longtime-inker Joe Sinnott were ready to tackle the project. Here's their version from Fantastic Four issue 201, December 1978.



It would be 48 issues before anyone else would tackle the 5 story x-ray. Then, when John Byrne took over the book in 1981, he had Terrax

destroy the the top 2 floors of the tower (and f-up the lower ones). The FF had to rebuild all 5 floors of their HQ --and once it was completed it was prime time to address the new changes. (Besides, more than anybody else outside of Stan and Jack, John *got* the FF and brought back a lot of what made the book fun to begin with --that is, before Shooter ruined it all with the *Secret Wars books*.) Here, from #249 is that cutaway.


AS JOHNNY MOVES QUICKLY INTO THE RECONSTRUCTED TOWER COMPLEX, LET'S PAUSE FOR A MOMENT TO CHECK THE NEW INTERIOR LAYOUT:
PASSENGER ICBM IN SILO
5th FLOOR: HANGAR
HYDRAULICS FOR RETRACTABLE OBSERVATORY
4th FLOOR: ASTRO-SCIENCES AND NEGATIVE ZONE ACCESS.
3RD FLOOR: PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY LABS, CRYOGENICS, ENERGY RESEARCH.
2ND FLOOR: BIOLOGY LABS AND GYMNASIUM.
1st FLOOR: LIVING QUARTERS AND VISITOR RECEPTION AREAS.
SPECIAL BAFFLES AND DUCTS TO VENT NOISE AND EXHAUST OF ROCKET LAUNCH INTO SUB-STRATA OF THE EARTH'S CRUST.
BUFFER ZONE
AIR CONDITIONING AND ELEVATOR MECHANICS FOR LOWER 30 FLOORS
OFFICES OF FANTASTIC FOUR INC.

And the latest version...Paolo Rivera's aforementioned new version. Nice to see see Paolo's rife and realistic painterly approach to the material. The rest of the book looks like this too, so if you haven't picked it up you probably oughta.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

And a big tip of the hat goes out to Marvel Comics Group, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, Keith Pollard, Joltin' Joe Sinnott, John Byrne and Paolo Rivera

posted by c. martin croker at 8:34 pm | 12 comments